British Columbia
Ministry of Transportation
Staff Newsletter

Road Runner

Summer 2003 On-line at http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/Roadrunners/index-roadrunners.htm

Busy writer wins grants, publication

Submitted by
Corporate Writing Services

Tim Mitchell, a ministry writer who helps answer letters to the Minister of Transportation, has received a double dose of good news about his own writing. He was recently awarded a Canada Council grant and has learned that one of his short stories will be reprinted in McClelland and Stewart's Journey Prize Stories anthology.

"The Canada Council grant is meant to help me finish a collection of short fiction, something to take to publishers," Tim said. "Some stories are finished and in print already, others are just two-sentence ideas waiting to be written. There's a lot of work ahead."

It wasn't long after learning about the Canada Council grant that Tim received more good news. His story "Night Finds Us" has been selected to appear in the Journey Prize Stories, an annual anthology which is now in its fifteenth year. Publishers McClelland and Stewart publish the collection to "introduce readers to the best new Canadian writers from

Continued on page 9

Sad duty part of a day's work for ministry's avalanche team

By Don Ramsay
District Manager, Transportation, Skeena District

On March 31, 2003, Johann Slam, an Assistant Avalanche Technician from the Bear Pass Snow Avalanche Program, received a call from the Provincial Emergency Program asking for assistance with a snowmobile avalanche involvement near Takla Lake, B.C.

Johann and his dog Bene are a Senior Avalanche Rescue Dog Team with the Canadian Avalanche Rescue Dog Association.

They responded with a small group of rescuers and retrieved the body of a woman from a size 3 avalanche. A size 3 avalanche has the destructive potential to bury and destroy a car, damage a truck, destroy a wood frame house or break a few trees.

Awards recognize outstanding service

The newly-created Deputy Minister's Recognition Award is presented to individuals or teams who go the extra mile to serve the ministry or the public.

At far right, Angela Buckingham, Manager, Project Services, Properties & Business Management Branch, is seen receiving a Special Ministry of Transportation Executive Award from Transportation Minister Judith Reid (pictured on the left). Other awards, consisting of plaques and medals, were presented in ceremonies held in Prince George, Kamloops and Victoria.

More of the Deputy Minister's Recognition Award winners are profiled in a special feature on pages 6 and 7 of this issue of the Road Runner.

New and friendly faces in the Peace

By Leslie Elder
District Development Technician, Peace District
Provincial Approving Officer, Fort St. John

Dave Duncan and Neil Wood

Do these two look familiar? Usually people migrate south, but these two chose to migrate to the North, to the Peace District in Fort St. John.

In November 2002, Dave Duncan arrived from Cranbrook to become the next District Manager in a long line of managers before him. With winter setting in, Dave wasn't sure what to expect, and as it hit -35C, he broke down and bought a jacket!

When Dave migrated north, he brought along another southerner from Cranbrook and Calgary, Neil Wood, to fill the Senior District Development Technician position. Neil isn't sure if he'd like to thank Dave or hit him over the head for encouraging him to move north.

Jim Guthrie

Although we have a very busy district and tend to give Dave a bad time, they have both adapted well and are preparing for a busy construction season.

Jim Guthrie's is another another face that may look familiar. Jim has returned to the Ministry of Transportation after nine years with the Ministry of Forests in Grand Forks. Jim was previously the Regional Operations Assistant in the Northern Region. He has returned as Regional Project Manager in Fort St. John. As you can see, he is not responding well to the large volume of projects bestowed upon him! Welcome back, Jim!

We would also like to welcome Joanne Chambers to the Peace District. Joanne is our receptionist while Alison Ruehl is on maternity leave. Joanne recently moved to Fort St. John from Edmonton, and other than the spring mud we're famous for, she is enjoying living here with her family. Joanne is famous for her Ukrainian cooking, and some of us have been lucky enough to enjoy the results of her efforts. Welcome!

Joanne Chambers

~ Still king of the road ~

Frank Sawatzky, enjoying a day on the links, has been very busy for someone who retired 11 years ago.

What retirement?

By Dan Voykin
Regional Paving Technician, Nelson

Believe it or not, it has been 11 years since Frank Sawatzky retired as Project Manager, Paving, in the Kootenays after 36 years (1956-1992) with the ministry.

What has Frank been up to? Building roads of course.

In 1992 and 1993, Frank worked for Selkirk Paving Ltd. of Crescent Valley as a project advisor for production of aggregates, seal coating and cost estimating. From 1994 to 1997, Frank worked at establishing Granite Consulting Group. And since 1997, Frank has been a partner in the business, which offers services related to road construction and rehabilitation.

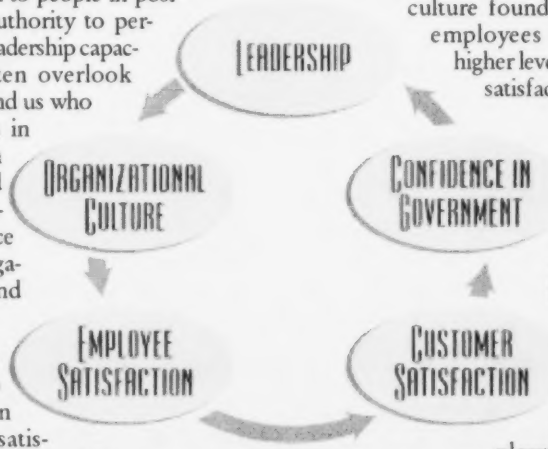
Frank's love for roads extends to his enjoying travelling within Canada and the United States and occasionally travelling around the province delivering vehicles for car dealerships. Other activities he enjoys are golfing, fishing and woodworking.

Frank has been a keen Road Runner reader since it was first published in March 1964. He has a copy of every one.

Leadership comes from within, contributes to customer satisfaction

By Dave Byng
Executive Director, Properties & Business Management

Leadership in an organization is not a function of position. Although we commonly look to people in positions of authority to perform in a leadership capacity, we often overlook those around us who are leaders in their own right and have a major influence on our organization and us.



The relationship between customer satisfaction and leadership is interesting.

The diagram here outlines the concept of "systems thinking" which has been highlighted by the work of leadership guru Peter Senge in his best-selling book, The Fifth Discipline. Systems thinking relates to the concept that connections and interdependencies exist between things to form systems.

Leadership, good or bad, has a direct influence on the culture of an organization. The values and priorities demonstrated by leaders in an organization tend to be reflected in the organizational culture that evolves.

An organization's culture can have a tremendous effect on employee satisfaction. Organizations that have a culture founded on valuing employees tend to have higher levels of employee satisfaction.

Employee satisfaction is directly connected to customer satisfaction. Most people would intuitively agree that with greater employee satisfaction, greater customer satisfaction will result. This premise has been validated by numerous studies.

Customer satisfaction, or in our case public satisfaction, is directly linked to the public's confidence in government. This concept is reinforced by recent studies of The Institute for Citizen Centred Services, an organization of federal government, most provincial governments (including B.C.) and several large municipalities. Their research demonstrates a direct correlation between the levels of satisfaction the public has with the services the public sector is providing and their confidence in government.

This relationship highlights the importance given to leadership development by the Ministry of Transportation and the provincial government more broadly.

Understanding the impact leadership has on the system as a whole underlines its importance to our personal and organizational success.

The same holds true for the other components of the system and demonstrates the need for continuing priority being given to the People Plan and customer satisfaction.

Kurt Edmunds' leadership has had an impact on customer satisfaction in the development approvals area and he is an acknowledged leader among his peers and throughout the organization. He has demonstrated the ability to represent the public's interests while working towards the success of the development community.

Kurt Edmunds

Kurt has consistently provided an environment for those he works with that is supportive, engaging and provides for staff development and growth. It is Kurt's holistic approach and attention to all the elements of the "system" that has defined his success and led to his recognition at the Deputy Minister's Recognition Awards ceremony in Kamloops.

So why do we care about leadership and customer satisfaction?

They are part of a bigger system that has a profound impact upon the success of us, our organization and our province!

Contest: Your photos wanted!

The ministry wants to recognize people providing services to our external and internal clients. Photos will be used in ministry publications and presentations to showcase our people and the great work they do.

There are prizes available for this photo contest, which begins June 16 and ends September 30. Your photos can be entered into more than one category at a time and should be sent to Cindi

Continued on page 4

Photo contest details!

(Continued from page 3)

Trowbridge by mail at:

Cindi Trowbridge
Project Information & Emergency Management Liaison
Properties & Business Management Branch
PO Box 9850, STN PROV GOVT
4D - 940 Blanshard Street
Victoria BC V8W 9T5

You can also send your photos in to Cindi by e-mail at Cindi.Trowbridge@gems2.gov.bc.ca.

Photo Contest Categories:

- Frontline Customer Service
- Ministry of Transportation Services - avalanche, centreline, rock scaling, ferries, etc.
- Internal Customer Service - administration, engineering, planning, systems support, etc.
- Maintenance Contractor activities
- Construction - all types, all stages/phases
- Environmental Enhancement
- Management and Executive
- On the Road - general transportation
- Multi-modal Transportation - trains, trucks, buses, airports, seaports, cycling, etc.
- Traffic on the Move - congestion, intersections, border crossings, etc.

The following must be submitted with each photo:

- Category or categories the photo is being entered for. Remember, you can enter more than one.
- Photo title or project name.
- Who took the photo.
- Where the photos were taken. Be specific.
- When the photos were taken.
- Photo description or caption. (Include full names and titles of people and events in the photo.)
- Complete model release form at: http://gww.th.gov.bc.ca/gwwcomms/Content/Home/graphics/modelrelease/release.pdf. These can be mailed or faxed to (250) 356-8767.

The panel of judges will include Gord Smith, Graphics Technician; Beverley Van Druten-Blais, Graphics Technician; and Cindi Trowbridge.

Biking along the streets of New Westminster, ministry employees raised $2,322 for the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon recently.

Highway Coneheads 'pedalling their wares'

By Lorna Leslie
Special Events & Permits Coordinator

The Lower Mainland District office has entered a team in the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon Big Bike event for four of the last five years. This year we welcomed pedallers from the Motor Carrier Branch as well as past employees that have moved to other ministries or just want to keep in touch by participating in this great event.

The weather was beautiful and sunny the day of the ride and we even welcomed the small "showers" provided by a particular rider's squirt bottle! The Highways Coneheads made lots of noise and raised a whopping $2,322 for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. The Highway Coneheads also have a team that has participated in the 24 Hour Relay for the Kids for the last 13 years and were once again running on June 14 & 15, 2003.

~ BIG BIKERS 2003 ~

Bobbi Webster	Judy L'Hirondelle	Doris Sundquist
Sue Sun	Grace Pascoe	Karen Peterson
Cheryl Moore	Rachel Wiersma	Nash Jamal
Wayne Keiser	Amy Choh	Michele Dar
Max Walker	Kevin Henderson	Les Talbot
Julie Leslie	Val Fabick	Lorna Leslie
Jessie Bains	Jeff Moore	Grant Smith

Summit Pipe:

Replacing the old with the new

By Tanya Gosselin,
Transportation Clerk, Thompson-Nicola District,
and Reg Lawrence,
Project Management Technician, Kamloops

It was no surprise that a culvert placed 10 metres under the Trans-Canada Highway at Kamloops' Summit Interchange in the early 1970s was in need of replacing.

A contractor augers material out of a 1,200-mm steel pipe casing driven 10 metres under the Trans-Canada Highway.

The City of Kamloops was checking its own corrugated steel culverts using a robotic video camera and closed-circuit television and offered the service to the Ministry of Transportation for the Summit Pipe, which carries subdivision drainage.

In consultation with Sherry Eland, District Manager; Dave Schleppe, District Technician; and Jeff Saby, Area Manager of the Thompson-Nicola District, Project Manager Reg Lawrence determined that in addition to replacing the pipe under the highway, the entire system needed to be replaced to avoid a significant failure.

Work by hired equipment included driving 82 metres of 1,200-mm diameter steel pipe casing under Highway 1, installing three 1,800-mm manholes and 269 metres of 1,350-mm interior smooth-walled galvanized culvert. The culvert will allow water to flow faster and prevent damage caused by rocks and gravel that wore out the bottom of the original culvert. Buried in years of sloughing embankment silt, the original manholes were difficult to find.

A precast concrete headwall was placed at the inlet with a custom-built debris catchment rack that will allow cleaning of debris during periods of high runoff and that can be raised to allow water to flow in the event of excessive debris buildup.

A precast outlet structure was placed along with a permanent grate for safety reasons to prevent children and animals from entering the culvert.

Take a risk on being great

By Dave Byng
Executive Director, Properties & Business Management

One of the top three most requested quotes is the one regarding the "man in the arena" or "not the critic."

This quote has always inspired me to do my best and to be willing to take risks, a couple of things we are trying to encourage in the ministry currently.

Man in the Arena

"It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat."

Citizenship in a Republic
Speech at the Sorbonne, Paris
April 23, 1910

Fly Fishing in the Campbell River on Vancouver Island

While growing up in Terrace, I developed a life-long passion for fishing. What better way could a father spend a day with his boys than on the river fishing? Especially when the fish are biting! With me in these pictures are my sons, Tyler (top) and Mackenzie (below).

Dave Byng
Executive Director, Properties & Business Management

Deputy Minister's Recognition Awards

By Brandy Nohr
Team Member, Renewal Initiative

The first annual Deputy Minister's Recognition Awards were recently presented to 23 Ministry of Transportation employees. Staff had the opportunity to nominate their peers, with the award being open to individuals or teams who have proven exceptional service resulting in a significant contribution to the ministry and the public.

Minister Judith Reid and Deputy Minister Dan Doyle hosted ceremonies in Victoria, Kamloops and Prince George. Recipients were presented with plaques and medals in front of their coworkers, family and friends. For further details about the Deputy Minister's Recognition Award ceremonies, check the Intranet site at http://gww.th.gov.bc.ca/Content/RecognitionAward/recognitionaward.asp.

2003 Deputy Minister's Recognition Award recipients:

At left:
Roger Hlina, Significant Projects Award
Jon Buckle, Public Service Award
Kevin Richter, Process Improvement Award
Kurt Edmunds, Process Improvement Award

Below:
Dorothy Turick, Public Service Award
Tracy Cooper, Public Service Award
Ralph Turner, Significant Projects Award

At right:
Stephanie Gillis, Significant Projects Award
Jan Broocke, Community Relations Award
Debbie Hoy, Process Improvement Award
Jim Hegan, Safety Initiative or Contribution Award

Recipients are pictured with Minister of Transportation Judith Reid, who presented the Deputy Minister's Recognition Awards.

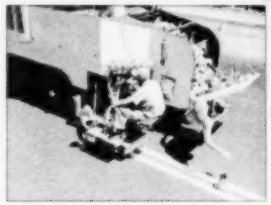
Not Pictured: Brian Jenkins, Fiscal Management Award.

Bottom Row:
Al Szczawinski, Gordon Smith & Gordon Bonwick, Technical Innovation and Achievement Award (Team)

Rick Adie, Lucille Green, Hennie Marshall-Aikman, Ken Clark and Ron Steer (not pictured), Significant Project/Process Improvement/ Technical Innovation and Achievement Awards (Team)

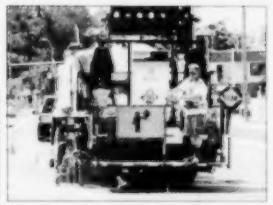
Bruce Mackay, Mike Minshall & Tim Meszaros, Significant Projects Award (Team)

Line painting then & now



Courtesy Craig Hilborne

This picture (circa 1960) shows how the painter sat on a dolly at road level, fully exposed to oncoming traffic. Painters controlled each paint gun by hand and were covered in a fine mist of paint by the end of the shift. The cone dropper hung from the back of the truck and used wooden blocks with flags on them.



Courtesy Mark Pratt

The paint foreman (Dan Dicbert in this photo from 2000) sits above, safely away from traffic. With an automated skip system, he chooses the various line configurations at the touch of a button. The cone dropper (Rob Harper) stands behind a safety gate on an enclosed platform at the rear of the vehicle.

Change is in the air in the Thompson-Nicola district

By Tanya Gosselin
Transportation Clerk, Thompson-Nicola District

The Thompson-Nicola District has undergone some recent changes that we would like to share.

We are moving to a new location near the regional office behind the courthouse at 441 Columbia Street in Kamloops. Our phone numbers will remain the same.

In June, Doug Kirk, Operations Manager in Merritt, will be leaving the district; however he's not going far. Doug will be working on the Coquihalla Project within the ministry till November. We wish him all the best.

Gloria Millar's last day in the office was April 10. She moved to Nanaimo to work for Children & Family Services as a financial officer. This fulfills Gloria's goal to live nearer her family and we wish her well in the future. Renée Mounteney has joined us as District Services Manager as of June 2. Renee was formerly of the Nelson office. Renée we look forward to you joining our team.

Julian Malinsky assumed the role of District Business Manager on April 1. He is responsible for providing business leadership in the areas of development approvals, right-of-way commercialization, special projects and partnerships. Good luck in your new role.

Two new staff, Bart Chemaz and Alan Vaness, have joined us as supervisors of weigh scales. Welcome aboard! Stewart Miller has closed down the sub-office in Barriere to join us in Kamloops and take over his old area, Kamloops West. Vern Goodwin from Clearwater now includes Barriere in his area.

It's business as usual here in the Thompson-Nicola District. Drop by for a coffee at 441 Columbia Street.

Purely professional — whenever possible

By Don Thatcher
Area Manager,
Bulkley-Stikine District

Sometimes we don't give our hardworking traffic control personnel enough recognition. Here's a little traffic control person story that will hopefully warm your heart:

Highway 35 runs north/south from Burns Lake to Francois Lake, a distance of 30 kilometres. It's not always a busy highway, except for the Omineca Princess ferry traffic every hour. This summer, our ministry tendered a construction contract to a Lower Mainland firm to build a truck-passing lane on this road. The contractor brought along their own traffic control personnel, aspiring engineering students from the Vancouver area. Herein lies the story.

Immediately adjacent to the construction project are a number of farms and fields of assorted nature. Early in the morning one day, Tony, a nearby farmer, wanders down to his hay barn, still a bit sleepy-eyed, and is greeted in the open doorway by an enormous black bear, who is apparently in there doing a little 'quality control' on the fresh oat bales.

Tony, now fully awake, turns heel and retreats up the hill to his farmhouse. According to his wife, he bursts wide-eyed, panting and wheezing through the doorway and, without saying a word, heads for the gun locker and retrieves the biggest cannon he can find.

Back out the door he hastens and on down the lane until he spots the bear, which by this time has wandered out of the hay shed. Tony immediately lets fly with his rifle, which succeeds only in making a very loud bang, the bullet whistling harmlessly over the bruin's head and shattering a board on the hay shed behind. The unsuspecting creature decides he had better leave the country. So he shifts into "I'm outta here" mode and races off to the west.

"Oh, was it quite a large bear, sir?"

In the middle of the adjacent field, neighbouring farmer Earl is out picking up square bales. As he's lugging a bale over to throw up on the hay wagon, he looks down the field and sees a bear approaching at mach 1 in his direction. Uncertain of what the critter's intention might be, Earl drops the bale and quickly clambers up onto the wagon and flattens himself out on the hay trying to look as inconspicuous as possible. He peeks up a few moments later to see the bear well past his point, still in full flight and heading west for Highway 35, smack into the construction zone.

At the work site, the flag person, Julie, is having a very good day: the weather's nice, no mosquitoes yet and the travelling public is friendly. There's a lull in the traffic so she gazes around a bit and something catches her eye coming full tilt across a stubble field toward the highway. At second glance this 'something' gets her immediate, undivided attention, for even though she's from Vancouver, she realizes that this is definitely a bear that appears to have been crossed with a freight train! At first, she stands her ground, but there's no slowing down or swerving by the approaching beast. Both the flag paddle and her hard hat go flying as she races up the road to the nearest enclosed piece of equipment, which happens to be the project excavator.

Art has come out of retirement to run this machine and he has just paused for his mid-morning break. He doesn't need any stress or inordinate excitement in his life. He has just poured a coffee from his thermos and is sitting there quietly admiring the contents of his lunch bucket. He has no idea what is forthcoming when suddenly someone leaps up on the Samsung tracks and crashes onto the seat of the machine, slamming the door closed and knocking over his coffee and worse yet, nearly destroying his lunch box. It's the flag girl! And she's talking very quickly and mostly incoherently, at the same time pointing back to where she had just been standing.

After making sure his lunch pail was safe and the top was back on his thermos, Art looked over his shoulder to see a very large black bear run right through a new ministry installed fence and across Highway 35. After assuring the traffic control person that the bear was no longer a threat, Art persuaded her to go and recover her flagging paddle and hardhat "before a car comes along."

As in most construction projects, there was a strong camaraderie and word of this incident spread quickly throughout the crew. The ribbing Julie received from her workmates was nearly worse than the initial bear scare.

A couple of hours later, the original perpetrator of this debacle, Tony - completely oblivious to the results of his bear-blasting - decided to go to town. As luck would have it, he was first in the northbound line-up. Upon reaching Julie, who had by this time (by all outward appearances) fully regained her composure, Tony slowly rolled down the window of his pickup and said, "Hey, I was just wondering if you saw a bear over this way earlier this morning? I shot at one but missed."

Being a budding professional, Julie asked, "Oh, was it quite a large bear, sir?" Tony stated, "Yeah, it was huge." The traffic control person replied, "Yes, actually, I did see one. It went in that direction," and she pointed to the west. She said nothing else but resumed watching the traffic.

A few moments later, she turned her paddle from Stop to Slow, smiled at Tony and

Continued on page 12

All the words that are fit to print

Submitted by Corporate Writing Services

The Ministry of Transportation, like any government agency, has a high profile with the public in all parts of the province. Roads, bridges and other transportation infrastructure have been crucial to the development of our province. It can be said that whatever drives British Columbia drives on our highways.

One of the consequences of that high profile is a steady stream of letters, e-mails and faxes from motorists, local government officials, transportation-sector organizations and individuals. Managing the flow of all that correspondence is the responsibility of corporate writing services. Like many other areas in the ministry, writing services contributes significantly to the way the public views the ministry - and the minister.

The Corporate Writing Services staff (left to right): Sara Wolting, Tim Mitchell, Maija Liinamaa, Sherry Stubbings, Gloria Valle (the department's manager), Victor Underwood and Paul Lidgate.

People send letters, e-mails and faxes to the minister at her legislature office, her constituency office and care of the ministry headquarters in Victoria. Additionally, a considerable amount of general correspondence is directed to the ministry through its web site. With rare exception, all of those pieces of correspondence - thousands of them, in all - end up at writing services.

Writing services staff handle these letters in a variety of ways. Straight-forward items sent along simply for the minister's information may just be filed, but this is rarely the case. Most of the time, the minister or a ministry official will need to send a reply, and this is where writing services staff put their skills to work.

They work with headquarters, regional and district staff as well as top officials in the ministry executive, the minister's office and the premier's office. They are also in close touch with their counterparts at Crown agencies and other ministries. All of the time they spend communicating by phone, fax and e-mail has one goal: Gather the best information available and as much of it as possible so the minister can provide a full, timely response to questions, criticisms and suggestions from the public.

Information in hand, writing services staff develop letters and prepare background notes for the minister. A careful approval process typically ensures the correspondence is prepared to a high standard and that all the facts are right before letters are sent to the minister's office. Nonetheless, it's worth noting that Minister Reid is diligent about reading everything sent to her and taking the time to check facts, provide guidance and rewrite early drafts as needed. They are her letters, after all, and they have to reflect her perspective and input. When the minister calls for revisions, it

Continued on page 10

National publication picks ministry writer's work

(Continued from page 5)

coast to coast." This year's anthology will be published in October 2003.

Tim's story, "Night Finds Us," is about a young man from a family with a history of nighttime hallucinations who discovers his lover is pregnant. It was first published in Vancouver's Event magazine.

Asked about the anthology, Tim said, "Placing a story in the collection has been a goal of mine for years, probably ever since my mother gave me a copy of the first Journey Prize collection back in high school. I am thrilled this story was picked. I bought my first house this week, but, honestly, being in the Journey Prize collection is more exciting."

Tim moved to British Columbia in 1995 to study creative writing at the University of British Columbia, and he later joined the provincial government after finishing off his degree.

In addition to writing short fiction, he recently completed his second feature-length screenplay and hopes to begin a children's fantasy novel this summer. He has previously won a National Magazine Award for his fiction.

Research and communication are keys to Corporate Writing Services' work

(Continued from page 9)

falls to writing services staff to make the changes and re-package the letters.

This process can take a bit of time but has been significantly refined over the years. The streamlined process that has been adopted, where information is provided and letters are crafted by writing services, has saved significant time for district and regional staff, according to Vancouver Island district manager Mike Proudfoot. Rather than all field personnel striving to be experts in the art of formal correspondence, he points out, the task is taken care of by trained and experienced writers at writing services. Mike adds that he feels the quality, consistency and timeliness of correspondence have greatly improved as a further result of this process.

Additionally, direct exchanges between writers and field contacts are proving worthwhile. Quick personal phone calls are breaking down barriers and allowing headquarters-based writers to get information faster and more accurately while they also develop a rapport with people out in the field. From time to time, staff in writing services will also go out to district offices to gain a better appreciation for the communities, roads and ministry-related practices they're writing about.

"Visits to the field give us the chance to meet the people who know how the practical work of the ministry gets done," says Tim Mitchell, senior writer. "They deal face-to-face with many of the people who contact the minister, and we get to learn how these front-line people spend their day when they're not answering our questions."

Last year, Tim was given a tour of Highway 4 from Parksville to Port Alberni.

"We got to see the traffic concerns at Cathedral Grove, areas where the roadside barrier had sunk half into the ground, and the pressures on Highway 4 generally," he said. "We also saw the tricky challenge of balancing the efficiency of the highway with the needs of a business that relies on passing traffic."

Writing services, however, does more than just write letters. Writing services manager Gloria Valle is instrumental in organizing the ministry's presence at the annual Union of B.C. Municipalities convention.

"Visits to the field give us the chance to meet the people who know how the practical work of the ministry gets done," says Tim Mitchell, senior writer. "They deal face-to-face with many of the people who contact the minister, and we get to learn how these front-line people spend their day when they're not answering our questions."

The UBCM is an association of local governments across the province. Its annual convention brings together elected officials and senior staff from more than 150 municipalities, 27 regional districts and the Islands Trust. The convention is an opportunity for them to debate common policy initiatives, but it is also a chance to meet with provincial cabinet ministers and senior executives from a range of ministries. The Ministry of Transportation has an extremely high profile at the annual convention as every region of the province has transportation issues to contend with.

Gloria coordinates the attendance of the minister, the deputy minister and assistant deputy ministers at this event. She organizes meetings, reserves necessary rooms and takes care of other arrangements, including the background information and briefing materials the minister and executives will need in order to be prepared for their meetings.

At the UBCM convention held in Whistler in September 2002, Transportation Minister Judith Reid and ministry executives met with close to 80 elected officials over three days to discuss transportation issues. Additionally, many of the UBCM delegates hoping to speak with a ministry representative filed requests that required follow-up after the convention. This makes the UBCM event something of an ongoing part of life for Gloria and her writing services staff. This year's UBCM convention is in Vancouver from Sept. 22 to Sept. 26, and organizing has already begun.

Another function you might not think writing services would be responsible for is the coordination of advertisements. As part of the reorganization of the ministry, writing services is handling more and more of this kind of work, gathering details and preparing advertisements to let the public know about open houses, highway load restrictions, road closures, rock stabilization work and tender opportunities.

With their duties varying from research, analysis and writing to fielding inquiries, organizing meetings and preparing advertising, the staff at writing services are a critical connection between the minister, the ministry and the public.

Gloria Valle manages the writing services unit and can be reached by telephone at (250) 387-5705.

'The Rowed Crew' cleans up at Corporate Rowing Challenge

By Kelly Orr
Executive Administrative Assistant

Want to get some exercise, get to know your co-workers better and support a community program for children? "The Rowed Crew" has been rowing faithfully for 90 minutes twice a week since mid-April - rain or shine - to support the Rock Solid Foundation, an anti-violence program for school-age children. The team has raised about $900.

Local rowing clubs and Coast Capital Savings organize the annual seven-week Victoria Community Corporate Rowing Challenge. No experience is necessary and the program is open to people of all ages and abilities. Victoria's best rowers coach the teams as they learn basic boat handling, rowing and racing skills.

We have a new team this year with only two individuals that have rowed before. Dana Charlton is our coxswain. Thank you Dana for volunteering to yell at us! Many days we have faced cold winds and swift currents, struggled to find our rhythm and just learn the skills needed to take a stroke properly. But mostly we have supported each other and each of us can now say we know how to "sweep in an eight."

All of this was in preparation for the regatta held on May 31. Eighty-five teams entered this year, and we raced twice against other boats of the same category and skill level, which helped eliminate the pressure and keep things FUN! We are proud of our third and second-place finishes.

Above, members of the Ministry of Transportation's rowing team, "The Rowed Crew", show their colours. The rowers are (top row from left to right) John Shaw, Theresa Dhillon, Nick May, Jason Wood, Kelly Orr and Samantha Penner, and (bottom row from left to right) Renee Nygren, Dana Charlton and Janai Smith.

Below, the team practises rowing along the Gorge Waterway in Victoria.

Participating in the program fosters team building, enhances working relationships and boosts morale. I'd like to thank every member of "The Rowed Crew" for rising to the challenge and volunteering.

It takes guts to get out there and learn a new water sport and participate in a race. Think about joining us next year!

Kevin Baskin

Kevin Baskin returns to Victoria as Chief Bridge Engineer

By Bill King
Bridge Technician, Thompson-Nicola District

After seven years, Kevin Baskin is returning to Victoria, where he started his career with the ministry 10 years ago, to take on his new job as Chief Bridge Engineer.

He has been working in Kamloops as the Southern Interior's Bridge Consultant Engineer, where he has been a strong advocate for the Regional Bridge Section.

Kevin has seen the section through three office moves and two organizational changes.

The Southern Interior Region's loss is Victoria's gain, and we wish Kevin well in his new position.

One opportunity leads to another

By Don Ramsay
District Manager, Transportation, Skeena District

Skeena District may the smallest district in the ministry (and according to the locals in Terrace, the most scenic), but that doesn't mean it isn't a happening place. Recently, the operational needs of the ministry have resulted in a happy coincidence where growth opportunities have been created for a number of people in Skeena District.

Shawn McKinley, District Technician, was invited in March to accept a special assignment in headquarters working on the Coquihalla Project. This has resulted in a domino effect, with even more opportunities for personal growth and development for others.

Geoff Phillips, Area Manager, Roads, has become Acting District Technician. Grant Watson, District Operations Technician, has become Acting Area Manager, Roads. Larry Proteau, Regional Survey, has become Acting District Operations Technician. Al McKean, Area Manager for the Queen Charlottes and Prince Rupert, has relocated temporarily from the Queen Charlottes to take on the Bridge Area Manager role for the entire district while still maintaining responsibility for roads on the North Coast.

Other recent moves include Randy Penner taking on an Acting Operations Manager position for Bulkley-Stikine District in Smithers until the fall and David Fisher moving to Victoria as the new Manager, Development Approvals.

As a member of the ministry's Renewal Team, I'm a big-time believer in staff development. There may be a touch of risk management in placing so many district folks into development opportunities, but I'm not too concerned.

I believe in the Pygmalion Syndrome: "What you expect tends to come true." That's certainly the case with staff in the Skeena District. We are expecting some rough spots over the next few months, but we are also expecting a lot of interdependence among the team members as people are challenged to grow and learn.

These moves will definitely be a benefit to the ministry because they broaden everyone's perspective and help build a real team approach to managing our business.

These team-building aspects are complemented by individual growth which will have long-term benefits for the individuals in their future careers as well as for our ministry today.

Traffic control, Northwest-style

(Continued from page 8)

said courteously, "You can go now, sir. Please drive carefully."

It was only after poor Tony was well up the road and all traffic had cleared that the air turned blue with a barrage of expletives, the likes of which Art had never heard before.

As Julie's verbal tirade reached a high pitch, so did the turbo on the excavator as Art made every effort to drown out the frightening noises. Before the next car arrived, the brief bout of cacophony had settled back to the professional image that we all expect.

The truck lane project was a complete success.

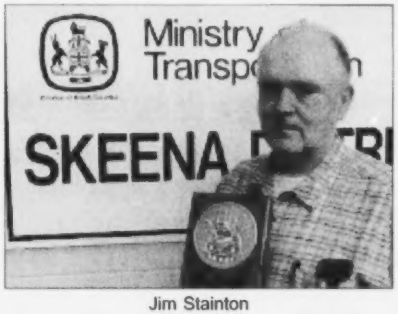
Traffic control people: Always professional, circumstances permitting!

Jim Stainton named PEP volunteer of the year

By Don Ramsay
District Manager, Transportation, Skeena District

Terrace Communications Technician Jim Stainton was honoured as Road Rescuer of the Year by Solicitor General Rich Coleman in a ceremony in Victoria on May 3. The honour was a highlight of the province's recognition of Emergency Preparedness Week.

Jim, a 30-year veteran of the ministry in Terrace, holds the rank of Captain with the Terrace Fire Department and has an extensive volunteer background. He's been part of the Terrace Fire Rescue team since 1966 as well as an active volunteer for the ambulance service when it was part of the fire department. Jim has played a key role in keeping the emergency communications system in Terrace functional. His primary volunteer role is as a fire fighter, and he participates in many road rescues with the fire department.



Jim Stainton

Skeena District Manager Don Ramsay commented, "While the citizens of the Northwest hope never to need Jim's services in a road rescue, they are really lucky to have a man with such dedication ready, willing and able to help. The ministry is very proud of Jim's accomplishments."